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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 BRUSSELS 000601

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SUBJECT: SPECIAL ENVOY MITCHELL'S EU MEETINGS

REF: BRUSSELS 00567

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Christopher Murray per 1.4 (B and D)

[1](#)1. (U) 22 April 2009, EU Council Justus Lipsius Building, Brussels.

[1](#)2. (U) U.S. Participants:

Special Envoy George Mitchell
NEA DAS David M. Hale
NEA/IPA Payton L. Knopf
NEA/IPA Alon Sachar
NSC Mara E. Rudman

USEU Charge d'Affaires, a.i., Christopher Murray
USEU PolMinsCouns Christopher Davis
USEU PolOff Courtney Nemroff

Summary

[1](#)3. (C) Special Envoy for the Middle East Senator George Mitchell briefed the 27 ambassadors of the EU's Political and Security Committee (PSC) on his mid-April trip to the Middle East, which focused on creating the context for meaningful negotiations toward comprehensive peace. Affirming the President's personal commitment to comprehensive peace, S/E Mitchell encouraged the EU to step up its efforts as a partner for regional peace. Senator Mitchell also conferred privately with senior EU Council officials Marc Otte and Robert Cooper. In the PSC meeting, the Commission representative and Senator Mitchell shared concerns about the anticipated one-billion-dollar financing gap the Palestinian Authority will face this year, agreeing that pledges made at Sharm-el-Sheikh must be met. France raised the issues of Israeli settlements and the need to open crossings into Gaza. The UK highlighted the Arab Peace Initiative as an area on which his foreign minister is focusing. Germany asked about Russia's role and the proposed Moscow conference. Italy raised Syria and Lebanon, hoping Senator Mitchell would visit those countries as well. Spain asked about the future of the Quartet. Senator Mitchell noted the series of meetings President Obama will have with Middle East leaders, including one held with King Abdullah of Jordan on April 21. He cautioned that international conferences on the Middle East should be timed to enhance the prospects of achieving specific goals, so the circumstances on the ground are important. Iran now topped the list of concerns among all the leaders he met in the region. Senator Mitchell emphasized the importance of transatlantic unity so that the naysayers on either side of the bargaining table would not find support in the international community. END SUMMARY

Mitchell Outlines Objectives, Next Steps

[1](#)4. (C) On April 22, Special Envoy Mitchell addressed and took questions from the 27 ambassadors of the EU's Political and

Security Committee, who were joined by representatives of the EU Council Secretariat, the Commission, the Military Committee, and the EU Council Legal Services. Senator Mitchell was joined by NEA DAS David Hale, the USEU Charge and Polmincouns, and other members of the Mitchell delegation. Senator Mitchell briefed PSC Ambassadors on his 10-day trip to the region on behalf of a "complete effort" by the USG in pursuit of a comprehensive peace agreement.

15. (C) During his visit to 10 Arab States, Israel and the West Bank, S/E Mitchell began a substantive dialogue with the new Israeli government, encouraged all sides to take immediate concrete steps to improve the climate for negotiations, and promoted full regional participation, including through integration of the Arab Peace Initiative into the U.S. approach. S/E Mitchell stressed that leaders in the region must act immediately to reverse the prevailing view in the region of "the inevitability of conflict," including by taking steps toward normalization of relations with Israel, quicker movement toward resumption of dialogue, and in meeting the needs of the people of Gaza. On the last point, S/E Mitchell said he encouraged Egypt to close off illegal routes into Gaza and open up legal crossings for legitimate commerce. He said a two-state solution was the only realistic resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and he repeated the importance of moving promptly, for fear that a "spark" could sweep away hope of an accord.

Iran: Pervasive Regional Fears

16. (C) S/E Mitchell underscored that all of the region's

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leaders, Israeli and Arab alike, had cited Iran as the preeminent threat in the region. Iran's objective was to project influence in the region by exploiting conflicts. In this context, Mitchell had pointed out to regional leaders that the resolution of conflicts would be a significant part of dealing with Iran. While Iran's nuclear threat was the primary security concern of the Israel PM, the nuclear issue and regional conflicts were not mutually exclusive. Resolving both problems required support from the EU.

PA Needs Greater Support Now

17. (C) S/E Mitchell stated that the international community needed to do more to help PA PM Abbas show his people the benefits of following the path of peace. He thanked the EU for its steadfast support for the PA, including in financial assistance and rule of law. S/E Mitchell encouraged the EU to step up implementation of its institution-building work with the PA police force, as this would be a key element with respect to final status issues.

EU: You Can Count on Us

18. (C) EU PSC Ambassadors uniformly welcomed Senator Mitchell's message and sought to assure the U.S. Delegation of EU support and partnership. Mark Otte, EU Special Representative for the Middle East, noted that Mitchell's message from President Obama had created "high expectations both here and in the region" and acknowledged that the call for engagement came with a call to "do more." In response to Otte's question about how the EU could help, Mitchell noted that we would be consulting the EU on an ongoing basis in which candid discussion among friends was needed. In this regard, the EU should consider Ambassador David Hale and General Dayton as key interlocutors. The Commission representative expressed concern, shared by Senator Mitchell, over the anticipated one-billion-dollar financing gap the Palestinian Authority will face this year, adding that it was important that pledges made at Sharm-el-Sheikh be met. Mitchell encouraged EU leaders to do more and assured them of

his vigorous engagement with Arab states and U.S. Congressional leaders on this issue.

Steps Needed on Access, Settlements and Normalization

¶9. (C) The French ambassador raised the issue of Israeli settlements and the need to open crossings into Gaza. Mitchell agreed that the situation at the crossings remained unsatisfactory and said that the USG would continue its "clear, consistent, and insistent" encouragement for Israel to act. The settlement issue was one of many topics discussed at length with Netanyahu, according to S/E Mitchell, and would be on the agenda for Netanyahu's meetings in Washington in May. The U.S. is encouraging Israel and the Arab states to consider steps to improve the regional climate. For Israel, Mitchell suggested that such steps could include freezing settlements, halting demolitions and expulsions, and implementing the MOU on Access and Movement. (He acknowledged having read FM Miliband's "freeze for thaw" paper.) Likewise, there were a number of concrete and important symbolic steps Arab countries could take now to begin to normalize relations with Israel. In this regard, the UK ambassador commented that the Arab Peace Initiative was an area on which his foreign minister is focusing.

Russia, Syria, Lebanon, and a Word on Transatlantic Unity

¶10. (C) The German ambassador asked about Russia's role and the proposed Moscow conference. He noted that his foreign minister was committed to hosting the Berlin POLSEC conference and was looking forward to a related Netherlands-UK co-hosted conference. The Italian ambassador raised Syria and Lebanon, hoping S/E Mitchell would visit those countries as well. The Spanish ambassador asked about the future of the Quartet. S/E Mitchell noted the series of meetings President Obama will have with Middle East leaders, including one held with King Abdullah of Jordan on April 21. He cautioned that international conferences on the Middle East should be timed to enhance the prospects of achieving specific goals, so the circumstances on the ground are important in determining the merits of holding such an event. On Syria, S/E Mitchell noted the recent visit of two senior officials to Damascus and expressed hope for the resumption of earlier Turkish efforts to bring about direct talks between Israel and Syria. S/E Mitchell closed by noting the critical importance of transatlantic unity - "even if we won't agree on every detail" -- so that the naysayers on

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either side of the bargaining table not find support in the international community. Evoking his negotiating experience in Northern Ireland, with its "700 days of failure," he said just one day of success is needed.

EU Council Senior Officials

¶11. (C/NF) Immediately prior to meeting the PSC ambassadors, S/E Mitchell met with Marc Otte, the Special Representative for the Middle East for High Representative Javier Solana, and Council Director General for External and Political-Military Affairs, Robert Cooper. Both also attended the PSC meeting. S/E Mitchell said his long, detailed meeting with Israeli PM Netanyahu created a context for dialogue which will continue when Netanyahu visits Washington on May 18. Mitchell cautioned that the term "peace process" is taken by Arabs as code for delay, and delay serves no one, except Iran. While somewhat sympathetic to Cooper's observation that Israel should not pre-occupy itself on the nuclear issue and instead deny Iran's influence in its proxy conflicts, S/E Mitchell nonetheless noted that the nuclear question was indeed paramount for Netanyahu.

¶12. (C/NF) Despite Israel's "yearning for acceptance," S/E

Mitchell said demands are ratcheting up each day on both sides of the Israeli-Palestinian divide. It is important, he said, for both sides to find conciliatory language, and ultimately change attitudes. The second intifada, S/E Mitchell recalled, was not planned by either side, but resulted from misjudgments, mistrust, and over-reaction. S/E Mitchell welcomed Otte's suggestion that the EU pursue a Gaza border-monitoring/anti-smuggling mission, provided the EU was sensitive to Egypt's concerns over sovereignty. His message to both Egypt and Israel had been that legal commerce must be allowed in order to stop illegal commerce.

¶13. (C/NF) Otte expressed concern that Arab countries were encouraging already difficult divisions among Palestinians, noting that PM Fayyad has complained about lack of financial assistance from them. Mitchell answered that much of his recent discussion with the King of Saudi Arabia was about the need to help the Palestinian Authority financially.

¶14. (C/NF) Concluding, Otte said he hoped the Quartet envoys could meet regularly in Jerusalem after DAS Hale opens the Special Envoy's field office and can work on follow-up mechanisms for S/E Mitchell's work. As with Bosnia, Cooper added, positive developments can spur others, who do not want to be left out, to join. S/E Mitchell agreed, but cautioned against high expectations.

¶15. (U) S/E Mitchell's staff cleared this message.

MURRAY

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